1:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

viously, at which time he incurred a debt of Rs. fourteen for the expenses of the wedding. This was borrowed from a *Thakur* of a nearby village who appeared most glad to lend it to him. Ever since that day this *Thakur* has considered him as his serf, and he is supposed to go daily to him; and even though he has worked for the *Thakur* for the past twelve years he has not cleared the debt and does not believe that he ever will. He is virtually a slave of this man, is on call at any time, and must give him the first work until he no longer requires him. For each day's work the *Thakur* will give him 1½ *seers* of *chana* (usually *Dolichos lablab*) or perhaps the same amount of barley still in the head. Money was never given, nor rice or wheat. This group of Kols in Rewa was a very intelligent one on the whole, but indicated that Rewa State was not a place where one could get more than just the necessary food. As one expressed it: "In Rewa there is no stomach hunger, only money hunger." This appeared to be quite a common expression over a wide area. Food was available there, but no money for the other necessities of life nor for weddings, burials and the like.

In centres like Kymore and Katni where there are large cement works, the majority of the coolies employed in the many types of manual labour are Kols. The work is very hard and the wages are low: usually not more than four annas a day for males and three annas for female workers.

Kharara Ghat, the isolated Kol village, is perhaps as independent economically as any Kol group studied by us. It was previously noted that this village controls about eighty acres of land. They say that ordinarily they do not sell the farm products, rather keeping them for the use of the village as well as holding a small reserve for emergencies. The village contains about 135 adult persons and the land farmed takes care of their food. Money for other needs is gained in many ways: during the months of May and June the leaves of the *tendu* tree (*Diospyros melanoxylon*) are picked for use in the *biri* manufacture. The leaves are gathered in the early morning or the evenings, and in the heat of the day the people sit under the trees or on the verandas of their houses and arrange the leaves in bundles of one hundred each, tying them with fibre. These bundles are then sold to contractors at the rate of four annas per hundred bundles. Prices vary somewhat according to the quality and the demand. The Kharara Ghat folk claim that they earn from Rs. 400 to 500 per year from the sale of these leaves.

Kharara Ghat has other sources of income. The village is situated on a jungly section on the edge of the reserved forest. Wood is

1:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

cut in this forest and carried to Jubbulpore where it is sold to customers among the military folks living on the Ridge. In this way three to four annas per trip are earned. The Kol who takes wood from the reserved forest must pay two pice for each load carried on his head out of the forest.

The cutting of grass during the rainy season is another source of income for this village and a good load of grass, such as may be carried on the head, will bring from three to four annas in Jubbulpore. Gardening would be possible along the banks of the river but they do not do any there. What gardening they do is limited to the manure pile where pumpkins and the like are allowed to grow. There is an occasional hunt with dogs and torches, mainly for hares which stand and watch the light and are either clubbed to death or caught by the dogs. There were no guns in the village, nor did they use the bow and arrow. Although they live right beside the river fishing is not common. Sometimes fish are cornered in shallow water and caught with strips of cloth.

In our visits to Kol villages we also went to numerous bazaars. The bazaar is usually a weekly feature and there is a definite rotation from village to village. In all our inspections we did not find anything for sale in the weekly bazaars which had been brought there by Kols. Any wood, grass, eggs or the like, which they do sell are sold privately to individuals.

Animals. Whenever possible Kols keep animals such as cows, bullocks, goats and chickens, but unless they are rather independent economically not many are found to own cattle. Out of twelve Kol families studied in Barela only four owned cattle: five bullocks, two cows and two calves. Most of the families had a few chickens. Dogs and cats are found in Kol villages but they do not seem to be owned by individuals, belonging rather to the whole village. No swine were kept in Barela, nor by any other Kol community which we studied. Some intimated that in the years that were past swine were kept but that they gave it up so as not to offend their Hindu neighbours. Kols never keep donkeys nor horses. One Kol in Barela wanted to purchase a pair of bullocks, and to do this went to a bazaar in Panagar a distance of twenty miles away, where he got one for eight rupees. A few days later he purchased another from a nearby Gond village and paid twelve rupees. Neither was a very good specimen.

The survey of Kharara Ghat indicated that there they owned 35 bullocks, 73 cows, 43 goats and about 200 chickens. In our investigations we found only one or two Kol families owning buffaloes; their cost and care is far too much for the average Kol. Eight out of the thirty

1:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

When the reserved forests are used there are certain fees that the Kols must pay. In Katni, along the Great Deccan Road, we found that the area of the house was considered for assessing the tax, and that the rate there was annas four per one hundred square feet of land area. In addition to this each family had to pay four annas per year for "sanitation". The standard rates for grazing cattle near Katni are as follows: buffalo Rs. 2-8-0 per year; cattle 0-12-0 to 1-4-0; goats 0-8-0 and to the shepherd who took them out daily annas four per head per year. 651 313 [233]

Debt. Debt does not seem to be as heavy a burden upon Kols in British India as it is upon their Hindu neighbours. The normal debt of the Indian cultivator has been estimated to be well over two hundred rupees. The surveys we made among the Kols seem to indicate that most of them will be found to have small debts of one kind or another, but that it is not the heavy burden that is so often found in village India; also that the Kol *panchayats* or councils are active in discouraging indebtedness. Out of eleven Kol families questioned in Barela six indicated that they were in debt. The highest debt was Rs. 16/- and the total of the six amounted to only Rs. 42/-. This is much lower than one would expect. Debts were mostly acquired for clothes and marriages. They were made in the Barela bazaar and interest on them was paid at the rate of two pice per rupee per month, which is an interest rate of 37½%. On the other hand one Kol family reported that they made loans to farmers and others on good security and that they had about Rs. 300/- loaned out in that manner. 426 [171] [623]

It was sometimes the custom, in order to avoid debt at the time of marriage on the part of some poor family, for members of the village to subscribe one rupee per family to help defray the expenses. This was considered as a loan which would be paid back later without interest charges if the family was able. The heads of the Kharara Ghat families were questioned about debt. It was found that only three were really involved: one owed fifty rupees incurred by the purchase of a field and a wedding in the family; another ten rupees, also for a wedding and a third fifteen rupees for the same reason. In some other places such as Panagar and Deori, debt was found to be more common, and in Panagar the Kols who farmed land would often take as a loan an amount up to one-third of the expected produce of their lands. Usually the respective *panchayats* watch the matter of the indebtedness of the community quite closely and in some places money may not be borrowed without its consent. In the industrial and city centres indebtedness is quite common, much more so than 426 585 426 [623] [369]

1:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

members of the family able to work they leave their rude huts and then return three or four months later with a bit of money with which to buy clothes and the like. Some of the women accompany them, though not the children, and when they return at the end of the season there are a large number of infants which have been born to them in the fields as they have worked. 178 221 464

There are three strata among the Kols of today. From the economic view the factory coolies are better off. While wages are not high they are higher than can be won in agricultural or forest work and the income is steady. As forest people and agricultural serfs they may have enough to eat, but no money for anything else. Factory work brings three to four times the wage of the Kol who works away in the villages, and lasts the year round. Everywhere it is said that the Kols are the best group of workmen among those employed and often they are the main workers throughout a factory where unskilled labour is needed. As they are working in the factories they are also learning trades, and fifty years from now it may be found that Kols have taken up many trades and have made good. There is no occupational restriction as with many Hindu castes. 178 434 464 [463]

As the economic level is raised there is usually found a definite improvement in living conditions. Bad as the factory lines are they are much better than the rude huts of the jungle Kols. A Kol in Katni has built for himself a brick house of a very respectable appearance. In order to supplement their farm earnings the agricultural Kols still practise on the side their primitive occupations of wood and grass cutting. The industrial Kols are not able to do this, for they must work daily in the factory unless it happens to be closed on Sunday. On that day it will be found that a few Kols have gone out where wood may be cut and each brings back a load to the factory lines. This is cut for their own use and is not for sale. 178 511 [313]

Wherever Kols have been settled for some years they have told us how they first came and lived in grass huts and how gradually, as they became sure of their place there and as work became fairly regular and certain, that they have put up better living quarters and finally have built good mud houses with tiled roofs. More is owned by them than they ever had before. They possess livestock and there may be considerable amounts invested in jewellery. [231 454]

Judging from the pictures in books like Crooke, Russell and Hiralal and Roy's work on the Mundas and other related tribes, the Kols of today in Central India cover their persons with clothes much more completely than the earlier pictures represent. Today one finds but little exposure of the breasts by Kol women, and in the 178 291